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AUTHOR Braun, Carl
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ABSTRACT

The relationship between reading and writing, a subset of curriculum integration, involves an expanding knowledge of how connections across the language arts work and how they can be applied in everyday learning. Various theories have been postulated to explain the reading/writing connection. To enable children to make these connections, teachers should create a classroom environment that invites risk-taking for both child and teacher, emphasizes the learning process, involves demonstrations of learning by the teacher, and represents a literate environment. The following classroom strategies can be employed to help students make reading/writing connections: (1) teacher student conferences, which allow teachers to gain insight into their students' interests and needs, while sharing insights about the learning process and stimulating further engagement; (2) group talk, such as a listening response or a discussion of a text; (3) group cloze procedures, which emphasize the nature of text, particularly the sensible fit of words; and (4) semantic mapping, which represents visually the link between spoken and written texts. (A case study, in which a fourth grade teacher reads the sound poem "Weather" to her students, is included to illustrate how a teacher can help students make connections between various listening, reading, and writing experiences.) (JD)

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Facilitating Connecting Links Between Reading and Writing

Carl Braun

Department of Educational Psychology

University of Calgary

Calgary, Alberta

T2N 1N4

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Slogans and buzz words in education come and go like fads and fashions in shoes and hair styles. We have invented, and indeed, survived a fair number of fads in the past 15 years. We have survived individualized instruction even though we abandoned the concept before we had clearly defined it. We have made it through the era of open classrooms, family groupings and confluent education. The trend is predictable enough to be mildly embarrassing. I would not suggest that educators are typically characterized by a bandwagon mentality; however, the pattern is sufficiently discernible to suggest caution. A "this too, will pass" attitude places at risk potentially fruitful pedagogical concepts -- at risk in the sense that ideas are abandoned before they have been examined and refined over a period of time. It is my hope that the notion variously dubbed "reading/writing connections," "reading/writing relationships," or "reading/writing integration" will not fall prey to the fate of the educational junk yard before it has been given a fair trial. My aim in sharing some of my current thinking on the topic is to help in a modest way to circumvent such a fate. I propose to sketch a brief rationale for the connection between reading and writing, to provide some suggestions for enabling children to make the connection, and to demonstrate one example of a reading/writing connection in the form of a mini case study.

CONNECTING READING AND WRITING: A RATIONALE

Recently, a teacher asked me to differentiate between "integration of the language arts" and "making reading/writing connections." In the same breath she asked me to tell her how she could "integrate" the language

arts. Very briefly, my response went something like this. "To attempt to differentiate the two suggests that they reside in two different domains. Rather, I like to think of reading/writing connection as a sub-set of the larger domain of integration." Further, I suggested that "integration must be seen as something that learners rather than teachers do (no to suggest that teachers are not learners). Teachers can, with appropriate instruction, facilitate integration, but the actual connections must occur in the child's experiences." Making connections is the essence of integration, and vice versa.

These connections develop not only between reading and writing but across the language arts gamut -- listening, speaking, reading and writing. Integration involves an expanding knowledge of how the connections work and how they can be applied in everyday learning. The application of this knowledge can best be seen when the learner begins to use what he has learned in one of the language arts to facilitate learning in another of the language arts. For example, the learner might become aware of how knowledge of language structure facilitates the selective, hypothesizing process in listening. That is, he twigs to the fact that listening to cues that signal aspects of structure (such as "There are reasons why wild animals should be protected... First, ... Second, ... Also, etc.) provides a framework for organizing thinking during listening that will facilitate both initial learning and later retrieval of the information in the piece. In other words, knowledge of structure and how it works has the potential to facilitate the selective, hypothesizing, organizing process during listening. Connecting (or integrating) occurs when the learner experiences

the application of this process in the act of reading, and further, when he begins to apply the strategies of authors he has read (or listened to) to enable the reader of the text to use structure as an enabler for selecting/hypothesizing/organizing. It is common, further, to make new discoveries about the intricacies of structure (to follow through with the structure example) and its potential impact as the learner engages in, say, writing, and then to make application of these discoveries in enriching the reading or listening act. In this sense language arts knowledge flows multidirectionally, and becomes mutually facilitating. In I.A. Richards' words, "one form of meaning making potentially strengthens another." That is the epitome of integration; that is the essence of connecting as a result of seeing relationships.

Various theoretical postulations have been put forward to explain the basis for the reading/writing connection. Burke (1978), for example, has suggested that learners develop a cognitive/linguistic pool which they can draw upon during reading and writing. To return to the earlier example, part of such a pool might include knowledge of structure. While such an explanation has some intuitive appeal, it does not address the question of access to the pool. Certainly, we are all aware of excellent readers who are less than excellent writers. If these readers, indeed, have a rich cognitive/linguistic pool to mobilize during the act of reading, why are they not applying part of this "pool" in the process of writing?

Tierney (1983) has approached the question of commonality in a somewhat more detailed examination. He, too, examines the acts of reading and writing to determine what the two processes have in common. To explain

his position, he refers to the structure of the composing process as proposed by Flower and Hayes (1981). Their model includes three major sets of elements: the task environment, long term memory, and the process of planning, translating, reviewing and monitoring. The commonality with reading, he suggests, can be seen as the reader becomes involved in the task environment, as the reader employs long-term memory in comprehension, and as she/he proceeds by planning and by a type of translation, revision and monitoring. He suggests, further, that both readers and writers generate ideas, organize information and set goals. According to Tierney, the recursive nature of composing is a property of both reading and writing.

Further clarification if found in the examination of the way in which fluent writers read during writing, and the way in which readers engage in composing-like behavior during the writing process. The fact that writers are their own readers seems rather obvious. Even the examination of how they read during writing is not entirely new. A number of researchers have suggested that writers spend a great deal of time reading and rereading during writing (Atwell, 1980; Perl, 1979; Rose, 1980). This reading serves a number of specific functions - distancing themselves from their own work, problem solving, and discovering and monitoring the clarity of what has been written, among others. Boutwell (1983), in a compelling case study of a third grader, provides a useful sketch of reading as a writing strategy:

> Reading was an important part of Marta's writing process. She zigzagged back and forth from writing to reading, rewriting to re-reading. Marta the writer would pause, switch to Marta the reader, and consider the text. Inevitably this would lead to a spurt as a writer again. The writer made tentative decisions in

> constructing her story to convey her message. As a reader, Marta checked to see if her decisions made sense. If they did not, then Marta the writer reached for alternatives. The writer flowed; the reader contemplated. One day Marta wrestled with crafting her draft to make sense. Through rereading the bothersome section, she realized the words she chose did not make the image clear for the reader. She revised by adding new words to her text. (p. 724)

Further clarification about the reciprocal reading/writing shuttling is seen in Boutwell's description of Marta's use of reading as a writing strategy:

> Strategic reading was an integral part of the writing process early in third grade. Yet by spring of the school year, her energy flowed into reading stories written by professional authors. When Marta encountered confusing parts, she reread them. This strategy sprung from the same question she asked herself in reading her own writing. "Does this make sense?" Sometimes rereading worked; often it did not... As in becoming a reader of her own writing, Marta became a writer of her own reading. With this connection, or reciprocal agreement between Marta the reader and Marta the writer, she created a bridge constructed by strategies she could apply to both reading and writing... She paused to reread troublesome areas, as she paused to reread parts of her own writing... Sometimes understanding came as Marta added to, or reworded, what the author had written. (p. 725)

Accounts such as these are consistent with the views held by a number of theorists who regard the writing and reading of texts as a kind of "tug of war between authors and readers" (Tierney and Pearson, 1983; Bruce, 1981; Collins, Brown and Larkin, 1970; Rosenblatt, 1976, 1980; Tompkins, 1980). All of this does not provide us with the solution to the inevitable problem, "Why do some engage in the tug of war" while others remain totally obvious to the war? Returning to the fact that not all good readers are good writers, and vice versa, raises the question of a probable commonality that transcends both reading and writing. Stated another way, what enables

some to connect and alternately, what inhibits the connection for others? Boiarsky and Johnson (1983) suggest that the connection between reading and writing is fostered by another connection -- the reasoning connection. This is consistent with Burke's notion of a cognitive/linguistic pool. It might also explain findings of studies like Birnbaum's (1982), which suggest that one of the major differences between proficient and less proficient readers and writers lies in their meaning-centered approach to text whether it is one they are reading or writing. How, then, are these potential "connectors" mobilized?

As I examine the work of Graves and Hansen, Boutwell, Calkins, and others who make claims about children's ability to make reading/writing connections, I see another common element in the descriptions of the instructional environments. Implicit (at times explicit) is the assumption that the aural/oral connection must be pervasive in facilitating the connections in reading and writing. Further, connections are at least assumed to be made as children are actively engaged in using reading and writing. I see, further, that connections are made as children are actively engaged in pursuing reading and writing as tools in their everyday learning. This is entirely consistent with views held by Harste (1986) and Pradl and Mayher (1985). I am also struck by the pervasive talk about what readers and writers do, the opportunities and invitations to reflect on reading and writing processes, and the pervasive sharing of insights about reading and writing. I would suggest that an additional component be added to Burke's pool -- namely, the metacognitive. Extensive observation in classroom and clinical settings strongly reinforces this suggestion.

We are back to a pedagogical issue that transcends reading/writing connections. At the very least, any discussion or programme addressing the issue must be couched in the broader context of the total language arts spectrum. Otherwise, I fear that the notion will suffer the factof the bandwagon junk heap.

I believe that one of the ways we can clarify and define the question of reading/writing connections in the broader language arts context is by sharing ideas as to how such connections can be fostered. My suggestions that follow are a beginning -- I would hope that others would find a similar forum to add their contributions.

ENABLING THE CONNECTION: CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND STRATEGIES

I wish to preface my more specific suggestions with a few general statements about some classroom environment concerns. First, I believe that there is an absolute need for a climate that invites risk-taking - risk-taking on the part of both child and teacher. This is so, at least in part, because discovering connections is most likely to occur in an atmosphere of experimentation, and experimentation demands opportunities to try without fear of "being wrong". Further, the emphasis is likely to be on the process of learning, and learning how to learn, rather that on arriving at correct answers. In addition, teacher sharing of insights and demonstrations of learning are more likely to result in connection-building than will emphasis on a transmission mode of teaching. Finally, the classroom must be a genuine literate environment where children engage in real literacy pursuits that matter now as opposed to tasks involving

completion of endless "dummy runs" assumed to prepare them for the time when they will be in a literate environment. This, of course, suggests the availability of wealth of reading materials of a wide range of genre, and invitations to read, listen to others read, to share, to write, to dramatize, to improvise, to script, and to set to music. In other words, children engage in the gamut of things that literate people do, and capitalize on every opportunity to celebrate through publication and performance. The suggestions which follow are no more than a very meagre sample of what one might expect in such a classroom.

Conferencing

Conferences (both reading and writing) create ideal occasions for child and teacher to share insights about process. For the teacher this is likely the best way to gain insight into the interests and needs of the learner. In this sense the conference becomes a crucial part of the observation/evaluation process. But more important, the conference becomes the occasion for stimulating and encouraging further engagement. There is no need here to detail conference procedures since so much has already been written on the subject. The reader may find Hansen's (1983) article useful. She describes in some detail the functions of different types of conferences -- initiating conferences, comprehension conferences, skills conferences, and process conferences. My only caution is that these designations are not as discreet as they appear in text form, nor should they be. I worry that the conference become another tightly circumscribed, formalized institution. There are many successful ways of conducting

conferences and the individual teacher must be free to experiment without administrative constraint.

As an example of the ingenuity of one teacher I include a brief description of Atwell's (1984) conferencing approach. In September she provided each of her eighth graders with a folder and a sheet of paper clipped inside and a letter with these instructions:

> This folder is a place for you and me to talk about books, reading, authors, and about writing. You're to write letters to me, and I'll write letters back to you. In your letters to me, talk about what you've read. Tell me what you thought and felt and why. Tell me what you liked and didn't like and why. Tell me what these books said to you and what they meant to you. Ask me questions for help. And write back to me about your ideas, feelings and questions. (p. 242)

Atwell explains how this approach helped her students get inside their reading and writing. Writing, for them allowed for a kind of reflection that Atwell considers impossible through speech. She regarded her written talk with students (over two thousand pages of it), as more sustained and more considered than oral conferences. There is no suggestion to replace oral conferences with written communication. It appears that both serve the purpose of helping children to reflect on themselves as learners, and this metacognitive link between reading and writing should serve to enhance both processes.

Group Text Talks

Talk in Response to Listening

Children from the early years through secondary school benefit from wide experience in listening to text, and then reflecting on the text. As

an example, children might read (and record for future reflection) a number of pieces of text and then discuss their production. Say, children read "text" like this:

The bug is on the rug.
The rug is on the mug.
Tug the rug.
the mug is not n the rug.
Put the bug in the mug.

As children read or recite this a number of times they might listen to a taped version of the reading. They can attempt to memorize the piece, attempt to summarize it, and then, discuss why it is difficult to memorize and impossible to summarize. They should be encouraged to discuss what the reading sounds like, and what it felt like when they first read it. The next step is to provide them with a piece of well-formed text like E.J. Keats' Over in the Meadow or for very young children something short like the following:

One day I saw a downy duck
With feathers on its back.
I said, "Good morning, downy duck,"
And he said "Quack, quack."

One day I saw a timid mouse
It was so shy and meek.
I said, "Good morning, timid mouse"
And it said, Squeak, squeak."

Again, children might read and tape the verse and listen to the reading as they reflect on the difference between this reading and the earlier reading. They will benefit from discussion of the differences in ease of memorizing and summarizing this verse. No attempt at exact replication should be demanded. The important thing is that the basic rhythmic scaffolding is there, and that the text makes some sense. Intrusion of

synonyms adds more opportunity for fruitful discussion of why such intrusions happen and the fact that they do not detract from the overall sense of the text. The discussion should include reference to the rhythm of the last text. Talks like this are really ear training talks and form the basis for enhanced reading, listening, oral production, and build an essential bridge to the writing and editing process. In short, good readers and writers are sensitive listeners. Talks like this can and should be extended to include other forms of writing -- and especially, for the purpose of comparing various drafts of children's writing, but also for the purpose of discussing the devices that published authors use to serve a variety of purposes.

Discussion of Text Progressively Exposed

To best illustrate the procedure here an example of unfolded (or uncovered) text is presented with a typical discussion scenario:

Text	Discussion
You can think of eastern and western Canada as opposite sides of the same coin.	How do you think the author has organized this piece of writing? How do you know? What are some things you do in <u>your</u> writing to help <u>your</u> reader think ahead like this?
	(Expose next section of text)
For one thing...	Why do you think the author says this? Let's see.
	(Expose next section of text)
the east has been settled for a long	How close were we? Did we get the general idea?

time.

(Expose next section of text)

On the other hand...	Why is the author saying this? What do you expect the author to talk about now?

(Expose next section of text)

the west has only recently been settled and...	Were we right?

(Continue this kind of gradual exposure and discussion to the end of the piece of writing.)

This kind of discussion might be extended to the children's own writing, particularly at the revision stage. It is useful at times to leave a draft for a number of days (that is, long enough to have forgotten the details of a piece), and then to group-read as the text is exposed progressively. Such an exercise reveals clearly where text needs revision so as to make easy sense to the reader. Progressive exposure of text can be achieved in a number of ways. Writing well-spaced lines of text on overhead transparencies is very effective. Also, for a small group, exposure of text on a computer screen works well. There is no suggestion here that this kind of activity should become a daily practice. There are many ways of accomplishing the same purposes; however, children approach this kind of task in a problem-solving manner, and enjoy doing it. The only caution is to make certain that children get a sufficient amount of time for actual reading and writing. No amount of discussion will

substitute the benefits gained from actual engagement in the processes of reading and writing.

Cloze Text Talks

Group cloze procedures are another effective means of enabling children to become aware of the nature of text. The emphasis, again, is on the process involved in determining a sensible fit (i.e. a suitable word) and then to discuss why the fit is sensible. Much of the reading done in a cloze activity should be done aloud as much of the meaning we make comes form the developing awareness of the critical role of pitch, stress, and juncture in relation to the context of the text. For example, to automatically assign a characteristic intonation to connectives like but, finally, since, meanwhile, etc., is to aid the process of comprehension in listening and reading, and to facilitate the process of writing cohesive text. For instructional purposes it is useful to make strategic rather than systematic deletions. For example, a passage like the following might be prepared for group analysis and discussion:

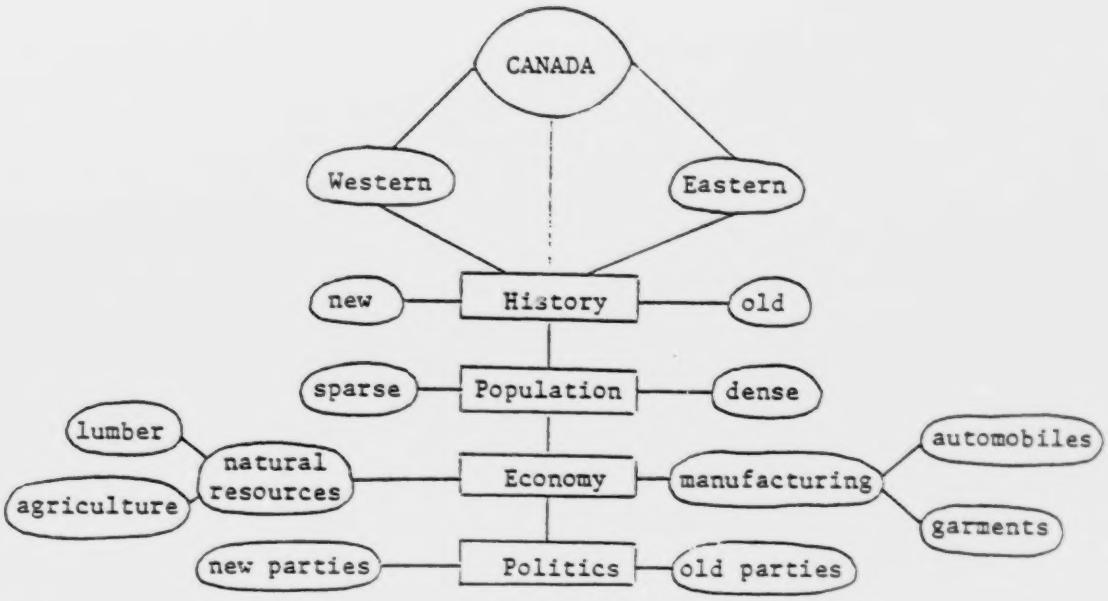
> It is logical that the prairies should have been called the bread basket of North America. For _____ thing, many of the settlers were formers, so it was natural to do what they did best. _____, the prairies are ideally suited for growing wheat. _____, the summers on the prairies are usually very warm. _____, the moisture levels...

In discussing choices, emphasis should be placed on the link between the overall organization and the use of structure cues or signals. Further, it should be clear that in many instances more than one alternative fits. Another way of creating awareness of anticipation and

review links in text is to provide children with well-selected single statements from a piece of text and then to invite them to suggest what has preceded and/or what is likely to follow. For example, the following statement is taken from the middle of a piece of text: "Beth had another problem to overcome before she would be released from the hospital." This type of statement can be used for children to hypothesize what information might have preceded and what is likely to follow. For example, the author's use of "another" cues the listener/reader that certain problems have already been mentioned. The reader is reminded to bear this in mind before she proceeds to consider yet a further problem. So, in a single statement the reader/listener is cued to review but also to anticipate. Children need to see that their own texts can be rendered more "considerate" of their potential readers by using cohesion devices like this in their own writing.

Semantic Webbing

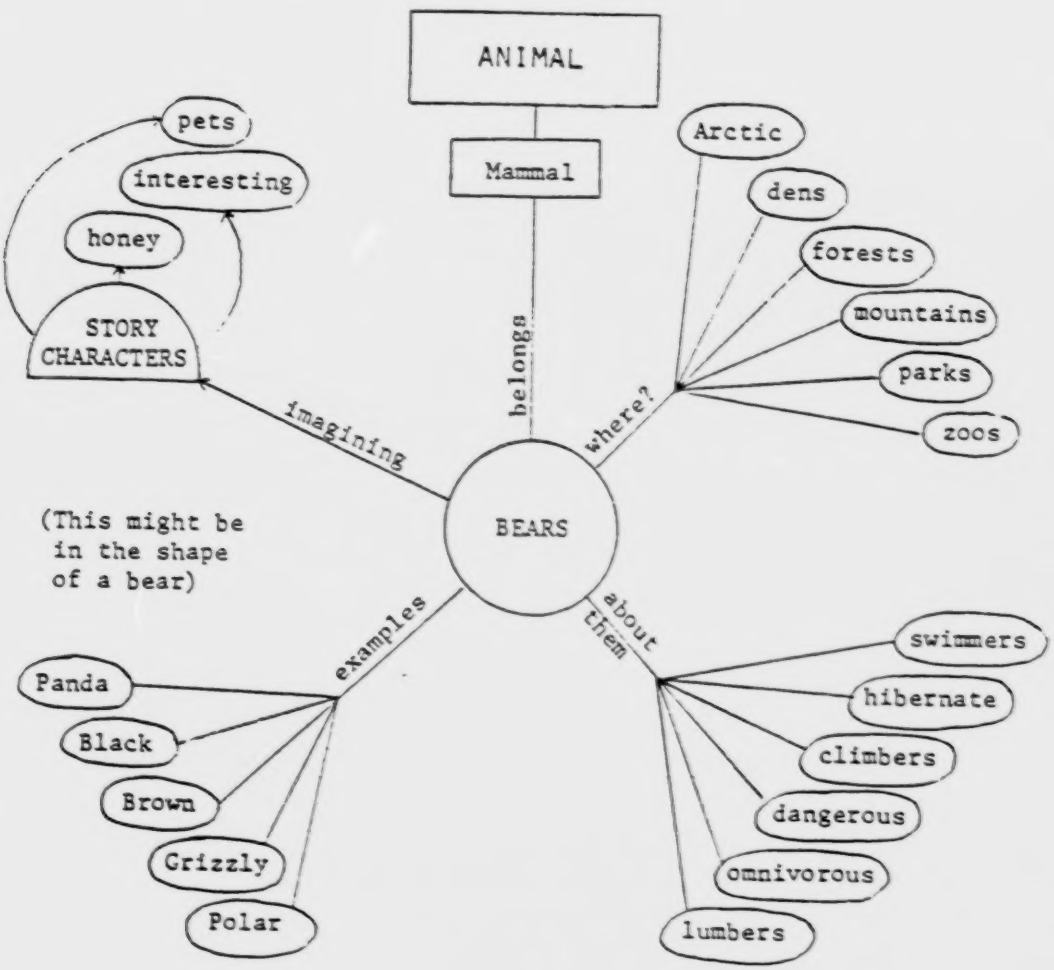
Another already popular device to enable children to see the link between texts, spoken or written, is the semantic web (or map). Let's return to the example used in the "text talk" illustration earlier: "You can think of eastern and western Canada as opposite sides of a coin." A mapping of the passage might look like this:



Such a mapping provides an immediate representation of the author's organization -- in this case, compare/contrast. It also provides a natural occasion for another talk about how this kind of representation can assist in the composition of a summary (oral or written), and also how it facilitates the memory/recall process.

Webbing also provides a useful means for assisting individuals or groups of children to "see" what they already know about a given topic -- not only how many fragmented items but also how these items cluster or web into a logical framework. Such a web can result from a brainstorming session prior to the writing of a report or the initiation of a thematic

unit. It not only enables children to see what they already know but it also shows gaps which need to be filled through discussion and reading. Further, it provides a means for the class to see how much they have learned as a result of their discussion and reading, but perhaps more importantly it points out the need for new strands in the web and frequently the need to reorganize the original web. The following web illustrates the point well. The class has webbed their knowledge about bears before they embarked on a unit on the topic (and I wish to point out the distinction between a topic for study and a theme. Bears is not a theme, merely a topic chosen for study.)



Through continued discussion and the reading of books and reports, they have added to, deleted from, and revised wall chart versions of the web many times. The process illustrates well how the web can be used in the idea generation process, in developing hypotheses for reading, listening and discussion, and how it facilitates the revision process. In fact, in this case much of the revision was done long before children put pencils to paper. But, then, revision is not restricted to the writing process. The process is, first and foremost, cognitive; the application of the process can be seen in any or all of the language arts.

There are additional applications of semantic webs. For example, children can be given a ready-made web and asked to write a rough draft to see how their pieces compare. They might compare their writing not only on the way in which they have organized but also on the way in which they have used signal markers to guide and direct the thought processes of the reader. This is a particularly useful exercise for children to do collaboratively. Talk about, and experiences with text organization like this should not be restricted to the language arts. The devices used in the language arts such as semantic webbing should be seen as invaluable tools for all learning -- mathematics, social studies, science, etc. Further, they should be experienced as a means by which personal writing can be planned and tested for logical organization.

I have not exhausted, by any means procedures and strategies which can be used to help children make connections between reading and writing, and indeed, among the language arts. I could have gone into detail about rewriting badly written text as a group process, about assembling text by

using knowledge of cohesive links, or the process of transforming genre as a means of gaining insight into how text works. It was tempting to develop the notion of language register and its the potential for forging mutually facilitating links in reading and writing. It was especially tempting to address the potential of reader's theatre as a vehicle to enhance the process of making connections. However, space does not allow the luxury; indeed, the topic of reader's theatre is sufficiently rich to warrant a paper addressing only that issue.

A READING/WRITING CASE STUDY

The teacher in this study has read a "sound poem" with her fourth grade class. The poem is "Weather", a poem which depicts the force and sounds of weather through the words, rhythm, rhyme and alliteration the author has used:

Weather is full of the nicest sounds:
it sings
it rustles
it pings
it pounds
it hums
and tinkles
and strums...
and CRASHES.

The children have read the poem chorally until the rhythmic impulse and the sounds of the weather are firmly established. They talk briefly about the author's use of sounds to help the reader/listener feel the weather. Following this the children have read the poem in groups of four or five. Some of the groups choose to tape their reading in order to monitor their production and to make modifications, a kind of oral editing.

By the time this process is complete some of the children discover that they are able to recite the poem without the aid of the text. The teacher discusses with them some of the reasons that the poem is so easy to memorize.

The following day the teacher suggests that the children form groups for group composition of a sound poem. She emphasizes the need to re-read the poem in order to re-establish the sound and feel of the poem. With the aid of the children, the teacher establishes a few general criteria for their reading, criteria which will be used to monitor their writing later:

> Does our reading have a strong rhythm? If not, what can we do to change this?" "Does our reading really sound like the sound of weather?" "Do the "p"s in "pings" and "pounds", really help the reader (and later the listener) feel the pinging and pounding?

The teacher assists some of the groups in finding a lead for their poem. Some of the leads that emerge are:

> Christmas is full of the nicest sounds; Spring is full of the nicest sounds; Birthdays are full of the nicest sounds, etc.

After the groups have settled on a lead the teacher makes some suggestions as to how they might proceed; however, she also encourages them to use their own devices as far as possible. One of her suggestions is that they brainstorm for words, (more words than they will actually need for their poem), to write each word on a slip of paper, to order the words in different arrangements, and then to group-read the different arrangements to feel the varying effects. Some of the groups are not quite sure what to listen for. The teacher encourages them to re-read the weather poem at this point to refresh their memories about the devices the author of that poem used. It is interesting to note the difference with which children

approach the reading of the poem after their own attempts at writing. Comments like "oh, the author sometimes uses words with the same letters together," "and sometimes the author uses rhyming words," and " "the author saves his loudest words for the end of the poem," suggest that their writing experience has had a vital impact on the way in which they approach the text this time. As children go back to their writing they discover that they need a larger stock of words to satisfy the new demands they place on the task. They go to dictionaries, thesauruses, and one group decides that the author of the weather poem has used a number of nonsense words (like splishes and whishes), so they decide to take the same liberty -- and with excellent results. The teacher constantly encourages the children to "test" their versions by re-reading aloud, revising, and re-reading again and again. One of the groups has so much difficulty deciding which of two versions they prefer, they create two poems. Poems are meant to be read aloud, and the language arts, like the other arts, invite celebration. The teacher encourages the groups to produce an edited copy for either publication or class presentation.

The teacher emphasizes the need for careful editing whether the final product be oral or written. In both cases she stresses the need to read aloud and to listen closely in the editing process.

I must return now to document the experience of one of these young readers/writers. Tom, early in this process seems quite uninvolved, indeed, preoccupied with thoughts other than those related to the task at hand. The teacher goes across the room to him, and the following extemporaneous conference takes place:

TOM: This weather thing gives me ideas on what I would really like to write.

TEACHER: Tell me about it.

TOM: Well, like this summer, we had this storm at the lake...and this reminded me of the sounds...you know, the thunder, and the windows rattled so hard Dad pushed us all into the closet; then the hail started, then more crashes of thunder. We could hear the trees snapping right near the cabin; the rafters shook and we could hear the water dash against the shore -- everything happened so fast (even Dad said it reminded him of judgment day). It was so strange -- the storm stopped as fast as it came. In minutes the sun was out, the leaves were sparkling, and the world looked like new. Everything was over -- so we all thought. While we were there on the deck wondering at the quietness (and everything was so quiet except the birds were going bananas) -- but otherwise it was so quiet -- when this flicker came from nowhere directly for the window and through the window -- crash, bang, boom, splatter! It happened so fast. Dad thought of the window that had to be replaced. Mom and I stared at the beautiful bird -- wasted! I can put in as many sounds as you want, but I can do it better in a story than in a poem.

TEACHER: Tom, you just go ahead -- that's a terrific story. Don't worry about the sounds -- just tell the story on paper.

TOM: I can't tell the story without sounds -- I'll just have to think how I can make them real to others.

Tom proceeds to write his first draft. As he re-reads to check for the overall feeling, he invites another short conference session with the teacher.

TOM: I have trouble making the sounds real. I like some of the words -- flashed, boomed, jangled, splished -- but when I read it aloud, it just doesn't seem like it really was.

TEACHER: Have you thought of things that other authors do to make things real to their readers? (The teacher at this point reminds Tom of some of the literature they have recently read in class. She points out selected pages. She points to some examples of effective use of simile in Katherine Patterson's <u>The Sign of the Chrysanthemum</u>). See, Tom, right on the first page Patterson uses some very interesting ways of helping us feel what she feels. For example, "On the banks of the shining river sprawled the roofs of daimyo's manor, like a great, lazy cat stretched out for a summer nap...Across the fields the tiny thatched huts of the serfs tumbled upon one another like a litter of newborn kittens, drawing warmth and reassurance from each other's bodies." (p.1) Tom goes on to find further

examples -- Muna, the child of serf parents, who has just been orphaned, witnesses the preparation of his mother's corpse. Now that she is gone he is going to leave..."never, never again, will I bend ankle-deep in the mud like a water buffalo, until my back wants to scream out." (p.2) Muna lights the candles, poverty-stricken and sad. "Until now, his mother and he had been like these two candles in a dark, unfriendly world." (p. 3)

Tom becomes fascinated (some would suggest side-tracked) with the impact of Patterson's writing upon his feelings -- an impact he never experienced the first time the teacher read the book. In fact, he recalls another Patterson book the teacher has read, The Bridge to Terabithia. He finds numerous examples of effective use of simile and metaphor. Finally satisfied with his foray into the devices and strategies of other authors, he resumes his own process of revision -- and with remarkable success. His revised version features such similes as "the birds chirped and twittered like an orchestra gone wild," "the dead bird lay still as the dead of night," "the thunder rolled like a million barrels of rocks down a cliff," and "the lightning zigzagged across the sky like something from a scary movie."

Tom, as a result of a rather simplistic task assigned by the teacher, has learned an enormous amount about what it means to "connect' the processes of reading and writing, and indeed, to integrate the language arts. He dipped (with the suggestion of the teacher) into his earlier listening experiences, he fine-tuned his writing with the aid of these and the re-reading experience, and he continually re-read and listened to the voice of his own writing. The teacher set the stage, served as a ready coach and support -- Tom did the integrating in an atmosphere, that allowed, even invited experimentation and risk-taking. His listening, his reading and his writing in the future is likely to be touched by this cycle of experiences.

Oh, I forgot to mention, Tom, a year and a half prior to this episode, was a "severely learning-disabled" child. How fortunate for him to have been discovered by a teacher who herself has experienced the "connections" in many interesting listening, reading and writing experiences.

A FINAL WORD

There is no formula which clearly defines reading/writing connections, nor indeed, the larger subsuming subject of integration. Nor is there a prescribed set of teaching strategies which defines what is meant by these concepts. I would warn, again, against the danger of dignifying a trend with an esoteric label, and hoping that frequent enough use of the label would dupe teachers (and professors) into thinking that something new is taking place. Somebody told me recently that she was using the "whole language" method. Her claim to the club of whole language proponents lay in her regular use of semantic webbing. With only gentle pushing I found that semantic webbings consisted of daily exercises completely divorced from anything else that was going on in the classroom. The activity was done as an exercise assumed somehow to transfer to something at sometime. Further, the preoccupation was with tidy webs which were then proudly displayed in the classroom as evidence of the approach to instruction. In other words, the emphasis was primarily, if not entirely, on the product. Neither semantic webbing nor any other strategy constitutes an approach. What matters is what children do with an activity or strategies, and where these strategies lead them in new learning and application of learning. And this requires opportunities and invitations to engage actively in the process, and to reflect on texts (oral and written) worth emulating.

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